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Economic and Social Council

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Substantive session of 2010
New York, 28 June-22 July 2010
Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Development cooperation forum

Statement submitted by Comité français pour l'Afrique du Sud, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-32774X (E) 260410 130510

Statement

Developing public services in the areas of education, housing and health during a crisis

The global economic crisis is affecting more severely persons in a precarious situation and may reduce the direct and indirect assistance given to them by States. Civil society has an important role to play during the current crisis to ensure that the goals of equitable development are maintained.

The participation of civil society has been recognized and supported by the United Nations since its creation in 1945. It is a major element of social progress. Civil society functions at two levels. In the first place, by reminding States of their obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights towards precarious populations, particularly as regards education, housing and health care. In the second place, civil society organizations provide direct assistance to people in need, supplementing government action.

Firstly, non-profit associations provide encouragement to the missions incumbent on States. It is essential that State public services should during a crisis continue to promote the smooth operation of education systems and protection mechanisms in the areas of health and housing, in order to provide safeguards for the poorest inhabitants. The European Union has recognized the role of public services, which are essential to maintaining equitable development, particularly in times of economic crisis.

The role of civil society is to ensure that public service infrastructures exist so that all can enjoy basic economic and social rights.

Secondly, to the extent possible, the components of civil society intervene by directly meeting the vital needs of populations in a precarious situation, when a State is unable to deal with the most difficult situations on its own.

Obviously a useful complementarity exists between States and civil society organizations in the process of equitable development. In this regard, South Africa is an example of nongovernmental organizations working together with the State to achieve a goal of social justice, so that all can have access to education, decent housing and adequate health care, especially as regards HIV/Aids.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize the priority nature of the investments to be made in public services in the area of education, housing and health, in order to deal with the consequences of the economic crisis. Civil society inherently promotes such an approach.

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Economic and Social Council

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29 April 2010

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Substantive session of 2010
New York, 28 June-22 July 2010
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by World for World Organization, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100

10-32807 (E) 060510

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Statement

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals will strengthen accountability to women by reporting on commitments made and actions taken to accelerate the achievement of Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals. Leaders should commit themselves to taking specific actions during the high-level segment of the Council at its 2010 substantive session, which will make a difference for women's economic empowerment. Actions are also needed on many other fronts, including accelerating the implementation of all strategic priorities identified by the Millennium Development Goals.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are central to achieving and accelerating progress towards all the Millennium Development Goals. The Beijing Platform for Action has stressed that action in the 12 critical areas of concern would accelerate progress on all the Millennium Development Goals and the world's global compact to eradicate poverty, improve education and training, health, the economy, power and decision-making, human rights, institutional mechanisms, the environment, a reduction in armed conflicts and the eradication of violence against women and the girl child.

We need a new assessment to be made and new action to be taken in addressing the lack of progress in terms of Goal 3. The World for World Organization launched its Millennium Development Goals global call to action campaign, "One world one hope: the Millennium Development Goals are a common vision and global commitment". The campaign aims at raising the awareness of the international community of its commitments to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment and to accelerate the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals.

We recommend the following innovative approaches, which identify key elements to women's economic empowerment:

- Demonstrating leadership by decision makers in prioritizing women's economic empowerment
- Mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies, strategies, budgets, programmes and projects within the public and private sectors, including increased earmarked national resources and official development assistance for gender equality, and increasing attention to women's economic empowerment in the context of international trade
- Fully and systematically integrating capacity development into each activity
- Generating and transmitting data, analyses and knowledge to decision makers and key stakeholders
- Involving the private sector in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and expanding public-private partnerships
- Making proactive efforts to foster women's voices, and the inclusion and participation of women
- Recognizing the negative impact of unpaid work on women's economic activities and empowerment and prioritizing ways to reduce their workload, including equal sharing of the workload between women and men

- Involving media and campaigns to promote women's voices
- Developing a new social change communications strategy to focus the world's attention on Goal 3

The strategy would:

- Focus increased attention on the voices, perspectives and contributions of those most affected by poverty and other underdevelopment issues
- Improve understanding of the world's cultural diversity and significantly expand public debate and dialogue on the issues that are a priority in international, national and local contexts
- Advocate for more open, participatory and inclusive policy development processes that emphasize the perspectives of those most affected by poverty and the absence of social justice